

## The Long View of Ending War

By Thom Bond

Making war obsolete may seem a lofty goal, and yet it becomes clearer and clearer as time passes, that it may be a necessity for our very survival as a species. We can think of war as a *leftover* from times when our complete annihilation was not really part of its prospect. Today, if we follow the curve of our "killing tech", this thing we humans have done for millennia, could indeed be the end of us.

That said, because war is so ingrained in our cultures, politics, behaviors and our economies, the thought of ending it as a human practice may be difficult to grasp. Add to that, our lack of skill and knowledge attenuating, let alone ending this practice, can make the very idea seem impractical or even frivolous.

I'd like to say right now, things are changing. Just as all technology evolves as we find it necessary (including energy, information, automotive, architectural, agricultural and yes, killing technology) the technology of peace has also progressed. We are learning more every day about what causes and perpetuates the human practice of institutionalized killing. Late in the last century and now in our current timeframe, a new technology, I will call *Needs Awareness* has emerged as a beacon of hope for many of us who have sought new ways to deal with this old and deadly thing called war. More than just a single concept, *Needs Awareness* induces a myriad of ideas that give us never-before-known ways to understand our long-held, highly destructive practice of mass killing.

Although the idea of *Universal Human Needs* first emerged in the mid1900's, it was brought into popularity by Marshall Rosenberg, later in the 1980's through the time of his death in 2015. The idea is simple yet profound:

"When we see human acts as an attempt to meet our needs, we can create stronger connections and understanding, despite greatly differing world views."

For almost forty years now, this vision of *universal human needs*, as a focal point for human thinking, communicating and understanding has been consistently growing in use and now, in 2024, it has become a profound substrate for peacemaking concepts and practices throughout the world. These new concepts and corollary practices are all rooted in seeing the fundamental motivations and desires that drive human behavior as our *universal human needs*. Thanks to Rosenberg and others, we can now learn, understand and integrate this new perspective. We can now see that at the heart of *all* conflicts and wars there are always unmet needs, whether they are for resources, security, recognition, or any form of well-being. (See the link to a list of universal human needs below). By fostering a deep awareness of these needs among individuals,

communities, and nations, it becomes profoundly more possible to address the underlying causes of conflicts more effectively and sustainably.

## **Enemy Images**

Conflict almost always arises when needs are perceived to be in competition or when there is a significant disparity in their fulfillment. For instance, when one group believes they are marginalized or deprived of essential resources such as food, water, and shelter, by another, tensions will almost certainly escalate into violent conflict. These conflicts are fueled by, not just our circumstances, but by how we think about them. When we hold *enemy images*, our thinking becomes focused on others that we believe are the cause, and less on the human needs that engender our pain. When *enemy images* pervade our thought process, we can easily lose sight of the logistical causes of our pain, resulting in a cycle of violence. These cycles are perpetuated by what I will call *transactional violence*, or as we know it, revenge or punishment. This behavior perpetuates itself, especially in the presence of *enemy images*, and causes our self-destructive cycle to continue.

It is important to realize that in our current practice of *transactional violence*, when we kill others, we are de facto killing ourselves, our loved ones and neighbors, because we trigger acts of violence against us by acting against our *enemy*. This vicious cycle is why today, so many humans kill so many humans.

## **The Antidote**

So how do we pull our heads out of this brutal and cruel cycle we *all* find ourselves suffering in? To go back to my earlier reference, if we don't have new technology to deal with this old problem, it will simply continue due to a perceived lack of viable alternatives. Efforts to foster dialogue, build empathy, and promote mutual understanding will almost never come to pass if we don't believe they are a feasible solution. So the answer lies in how effectively we can engage in such matters - Enter *Needs Awareness*.

As I mentioned earlier, *Needs Awareness* supercharges the effect of human communication and understanding because it transcends our circumstances and helps us focus on the thing we *all* want in our futures - to have our needs met, to be happy and have a fulfilling life. And so as we can elevate our capabilities in understanding and skillfully creating a focus on this, enemy images and violence become, eventually, obsolete.

Educational initiatives play a crucial role in *Needs Awareness*. By educating individuals about the interconnectedness of human needs and the importance of addressing them collectively, societies can more readily cultivate a culture of peace. Education in *Needs Awareness* can equip people with the skills needed to resolve conflicts nonviolently, through mediation, and dialogue. By creating and delivering educational programs that make these skills more available, conflict

resolution, and global citizenship can ultimately foster a generation committed to peace.

### **The Long View**

Ultimately, the path to ending war through needs awareness will require a holistic approach that addresses the physical, psychological, and socio-economic dimensions of human needs. It necessitates a commitment to empathy and collaboration at all levels of society. While the journey may be time consuming and challenging, the potential rewards are perhaps existential and beautiful - A world where conflicts are resolved peacefully, where all individuals can thrive, and where war is only found in history books.

### **About the author:**

Thom Bond brings 35 years of human potential study and training experience to his work as a writer, speaker and workshop leader. His passion and knowledge of Compassionate Communication and Needs Awareness combine to create a practical, understandable, humorous, and potentially profound approach for learning and integrating skills that help us experience more compassion and understanding. He is described as concise, inspiring, sincere and optimistic, applying transformational and spiritual perspectives to real-life situations. Many of his students become active facilitators, trainers, and practitioners.

Over the past twenty years as a student of Marshall Rosenberg, Thom's work has touched hundreds of thousands of clients, participants, readers, and listeners throughout the world. He has been featured in The New York Times, New York Magazine, Vogue Magazine, and Yoga Magazine.

Thom is the author and lead trainer of The Compassion Course ([compassioncourse.org](http://compassioncourse.org)), a one-year course open to anyone who wants more compassion in their life or in our world. The Compassion Course is entering its 14th year, having already served over 30,000 participants in more than 120 countries in 16 languages. The course starts June 19th. Registration closes on July 8<sup>th</sup> at 12:00 Noon Eastern Time.

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